



Congress of the United States House of Representatives

September 7, 2007

WAYNE T. GILCHREST
1st District, Maryland

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

General David Petraeus, the Commander, Multi-National Forces-Iraq and Ryan Crocker, the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, will soon deliver their reports on the Baghdad security initiative and Iraq's political reconciliation. In the following weeks, Congress will debate their analysis and conclusions in anticipation of your assessment of the current strategy.

It is evident that the troop surge has provided added security in numerous parts of Baghdad and political developments at the local level are encouraging. It is my hope that these gains can help set the stage for political reconciliation at the national level and eventually suppress sectarian and ethnic violence in other parts of the country. Tragically, however, sectarian violence continues to cause death and displacement in Baghdad and elsewhere. Furthermore, there is consensus within our military establishment that current troop levels cannot be sustained much past March of 2008, unless already onerous tours of duty are extended yet again. These variables remain at odds with our current strategy and are converging to make it almost impossible for the United States to achieve the long-term solution that is needed in Iraq.

Much is riding on the Petraeus/Crocker report, but there are other, critical pieces to this puzzle that cannot be answered by a report on merely the status of Iraq's capital city. As you consider the analysis presented by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker on the status of Baghdad's security progress, I urge you to consider the following questions before your address to the American people on the status of the war in Iraq, our overall Middle East policy and its importance to the global war on terror.

1. How much of the violence is sectarian and how much is foreign terrorist? How much of the violence may be caused by Saddam loyalists – unemployment, displacement, criminal activity, etc.?
2. Has intra-sectarian violence continued to worsen in the southern provinces of Iraq?
3. How much of the violence in Iraq could be reduced or curbed or influenced by Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Iran or other Middle East states or Muslim countries?
4. Who is financing the foreign fighters? The sectarian fighters?
5. King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia our ally, recently said the U. S. is involved in an illegal war in Iraq. Iran, not our ally has also said we are in an illegal war there also. What is the present



diplomatic relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia?

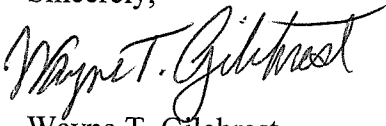
6. What is the current state of dialogue between the Sunni, Shi'a and Kurds in the Iraqi parliament?
7. What is the likelihood of Iraqis reaching a political solution with different factions within the next year? What might that political solution look like? What role will the Iraqi Army play in the political arena toward a stable Iraq?
8. Will Iraq's oil be state owned or private or a combination? Is there a plan to equitably distribute the oil resources to all of Iraqis?
9. Are there any discussions with the wealthier Middle Eastern countries to provide financial assistance in the area of security, political progress and the expanding economic and refugee crises in Iraq?
10. Is there a military, political, diplomatic and economic effort underway to solve the problems in Iraq and the greater Middle East? Is that effort in the form of a coordinated plan? Is attrition of the terrorists and insurgents a part of that plan?
11. How involved is Saudi Arabia with the Sunni tribal leaders and how involved is Iran with the Shiite tribal and religious leaders?
12. How much Al Qaeda activity is there in the Kurdish areas of Iraq? What is the danger of a Turkish incursion?
13. Is there anywhere in Iraq where Al Qaeda is welcome? Are there any Middle East governments supporting Al Qaeda openly or covertly financially or other wise? Does Al Qaeda exist in Iraq in the same way they were organized prior to 9/11?
14. Has any considerations been given to Dayton style negotiations with Iraqi factions?
15. What is the Iraqi health care system like at this time? What is the general condition of their civilian hospitals? Do they have military hospitals? What kind of care do Iraqi soldiers get when they are discharged from a hospital?
16. Is there a De-Bathification program and what is its status?
17. Is there a British plan for continued activity in Basra? Is the Iraqi Army taking over? As the British leave, what is the local militia situation? Are there any clans in Basra that have a relationship with Iran?
18. Where does the Palestinian-Israeli issue play in the war on terror and the broader issue of constructive Middle East diplomacy?
19. Democracy is often a very slow process. Knowing that and understanding the history of Iraq and the Middle East, including some of our non-democratic allies like Saudi Arabia, Jordan and

others, can Iraq move forward with reconciliation with the sectarian divide, economic stability and security in a democratic context if U.S. troops leave or when U.S. troops leave?

20. The cost for staying in Iraq both in human tragedy and dollars is astronomical. The cost of leaving prematurely could hold catastrophic consequences. What plan does the U.S. have to help make Iraq resilient to instability and chaos?

I hope that we can move towards a policy that secures America's long-term national security interests at home and abroad. I look forward to working with your administration on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Wayne T. Gilchrest". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent "W" and "G".

Wayne T. Gilchrest
Member of Congress